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WEEKEND
TV GUIDE



Braving the
shave at
wildlife park
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Tennis star helps cut the ribbon at Abingdon leisure centre ceremony

Paralympian applauds £1.7m upgrade at gym

By Eva Astreinidou &
George Scotland

A £1.7MILLION revamp of the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre has finally been unveiled.

The opening on Wednesday began with a speech from Councillor Mike Badcock before he cut the green ribbon alongside two-time Paralympian tennis player Louise Hunt to mark the official opening of the new extension.

Following the investment from Vale of White Horse District Council and operator Better, the leisure and tennis centre now features a 290sqm extension, newly refurbished changing rooms, the latest Techno gym 'Excite' equipment, and a new outside area for young children.

Peter Bundy, deputy managing director of Better, said: "In times when public funds are hard to come by, it's a real credit to the council and the strength of our partnership that we continue to invest in the facilities."

Mr Bundy joined other senior figures in the scheme to test his fitness on the rowing machines.

Also giving it a go was Cllr Badcock, whose GP advised him to join the gym last year after having a knee and hip replacement.

He said: "The gym really helped me get back on my feet after my operations."

"All the new facilities are brilliant and I really hope this encourages more young people to get into sport."

"There should be no embarrassment when you sign up to the gym. We have people of all shapes and sizes who come and are happy to be here."

The centre currently has 800,000 visitors a year with gym memberships growing even more thanks to the new extension, according to Ben Whaymand, manager of Better.

He said: "I'm glad to say we've been able to do this. Since we opened the new gym last month, our online membership has grown to its highest figure so far."

The additional space will mean up to 50 more people will be able to use the gym at any one time.

Gym enthusiast Denna Leaby from Abingdon said: "I am a regular user of the gym. It's convenient for me as I work round the corner and will certainly continue due to the new upgrade."

The gymnasium is also wheelchair friendly, as Paralympian Louise, who has competed for Team GB in London and Rio, found out.



• Continues on page 3

• Deputy managing director of Better Peter Bundy cuts the ribbon with paralympian Louise Hunt and councillor Mike Badcock

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Trying out £1.7m gym

• From front page

Louise said: "The seated rowing is my favourite thing in this gym and I'm so glad it is wheelchair friendly. I will use this gym on a regular basis not only for the tennis courts, but this as well."

She added: "I was nervous about joining the gym once, but I strongly advise local people to take advantage of these wonderful facilities and give it a go, whether it be the rowing machine or treadmill."

• Pete Bundy and Cllr Mike Badcock try the rowing machines



News Bites

Nature report

ABINGDON: Wild Oxfordshire will be releasing a report on Oxfordshire's state of nature.

The report, due to be launched on March 21, will delve into the state of Oxfordshire's wildlife, which species are at risk in the county, how much woodland is around, and what can be done better to protect nature.

More than 40 environmental and conservation-focused organisations have worked on this report over 18 months.

Contact Wild Oxfordshire to reserve your copy.

Clucky winners

ABINGDON: The Stonehill Community Garden group has announced the winning names for three chickens after they ran a competition.



The winning chicken names – Sally, Libby and Connie (left to right) – were revealed at the group's fruit tree event last month.

The winners who nominated the names took home six fresh eggs from the hens.

Revamped library reopens

By Eva Astreimidou

AN ABINGDON school's revamped library and resource centre launched last week unlocking potential to 'open the door to stories' and 'make sense of the world' through unique educational reading activities for its students.

On Thursday last week, Mark Thornton, owner of Mostly Books in Abingdon, cut the ribbon to the library, which is part of the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) at Larkmead, in Faringdon Road.

The centre has served as a hub of activity for students and is 'not just a place to house books'.

Students are encouraged to use the facility for reading, homework, revision and/or research throughout the day.

The centre will host reading-related activities such as book clubs, book quizzes, workshops, the 'Kids Lit Quiz,' film clubs, World Book Day activities and lunchtime talks.

Mr Thornton said: "Reading opens the door to stories, and it is 'story' that shapes our abil-

ity to make sense of the world, and make imaginative leaps to solve problems and drive progress.

"Reading builds empathy, allows us to share experiences way beyond our own narrow reality – which is why reading has been shown to boost everything from improving focus, boosting maths skills and becoming more resilient.

"We are always aware, however, that for every child that devours books, there are another 10 for whom reading is far more of a challenge.

"To get them into the reading habit may need several attempts – and plenty of different types of books – to get the momentum going.

"That's where libraries really add incredible value."

Resource centre manager Linda Stone said: "Larkmead School is dedicated to raising literacy levels across the school.

"The provision of a school library with a variety of reading resources that are appealing to our students is a key factor in achieving this."



Mark Thornton, owner of Mostly Books in Abingdon cuts the ribbon on the new library and resource centre at Larkmead School

Timetabled library lessons take place once a fortnight for all KS3 classes where the focus is on independent reading for

pleasure, and reading improvement programmes such as 'Accelerated Reading' and 'Star Reading' are used to sup-

port students' reading skills. The new centre and library will also be available to rent as an events/conference facility.

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Calls for transparency on cuts to healthcare

By George Welch

OXFORDSHIRE County Council has called for transparency and further detail about knock-on effects of plans to change primary care from the group that commissions health services across the county.

The county's cabinet said in a meeting on Tuesday last week that it cannot support the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's (OCCG) plans to deal with a £134m funding gap in the region's NHS.

The first phase of consultation on the plans for the future of Oxfordshire Health and Care Services started on January 16.

In the meeting, members of the cabinet reviewed the consultation and referred to a lack of forward thinking in the sustainability and transformation plan (STP), in that a change in one amenity could lead to a wider 'domino effect'.

In a post-meeting report, the response was that the plans, which include a change in bed-stock, intensive care services and maternity services at the Horton General Hospital could have a significant knock-on effect on other services.

The councillors resolved: "These possible impacts are not

covered by this consultation.

"This is a vital issue for local people and is therefore a serious deficiency in the consultation document."

They said they understand the concept of closing hospital bed stock to help prevent admission and also help to reduce harmful long stays, but added: "The UK already has lower numbers of beds than comparable European countries."

"At a time when pressures on emergency departments are rising and delayed transfers of care remain a cause for concern, it may be premature to make these changes."

"It may be more sensible for Oxfordshire to adopt a 'wait and see' policy on this issue until the impact of bed closures proposed in other parts of the country can be properly evaluated."

On the topic of adult social care in the community and the proposals of focusing on care closer to home, they said: "There are times in the acute phase of an illness or in cases requiring complex care or post-op care when a hospital bed may be the best place to be."

Again, the proposals do not contain the detail we would need about community services for us to have a sensible understand-

ing of their impact on adult social care."

The cabinet also concluded that the production of the consultation underwent a significant delay that could have in turn affected the coherence of the proposals.

They added: "It makes the consultation feel less transparent to communities. The consultation proposals as they stand are unlikely to satisfy the concerns of people in some parts of the county."

The report added that with the addition of 100,000 homes within Oxfordshire in the period 2011-31, of which around 85,000 remain to be built, that the NHS proposals "should take full account of the scale of new housing".

A spokeswoman for Oxfordshire CCG said: "The CCG is currently seeking people's views and opinions on the plans for transformation of health services in Oxfordshire."

"Our consultation will listen to feedback from everyone who gets involved, including cabinet members at Oxfordshire County Council."

The updated version of the OCCG proposals will be presented to the county council on March 21 to gather further comment.



• Chris Green with Jodie Sabin from the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and below, halfway through the shave

Close shave for Chris

COTSWOLD Wildlife Park handed out quite a treat to global charity Make-A-Wish.

On February 23, the Make-A-Wish Foundation visited the park for a cheque presentation by the penguin keeper, Chris Green.

Mr Green recently raised £1,717.50 by shaving off his beard that he was growing for three years for his favourite charity, and presented them with the cheque in the penguin enclosure.

He said: "I'm really touched by people's generosity and want to thank everyone who supported me and donated to this incredible charity. I'm already plotting my next fundraising venture and if anyone has any great ideas, please get in touch!"

Jodie Sabin from Make-A-



Wish said: "Chris has raised a fantastic amount of money for Make-A-Wish and we are really grateful to him for everything he has done."

"The money raised will go towards granting magical wishes for children living with life threatening illnesses and we simply wouldn't be able to do this work without the amazing support from people like Chris."

News Bites

E-fit released

BICESTER: An e-fit image has been released after a woman was sexually assaulted in Bicester two weeks ago.

Police would like to speak to a man who matches the description of the e-fit (pictured below) in connection with the sexual assault.



The incident took place at around 8.50pm on Thursday, February 16 when a woman in her 30s was walking in Chapel Street when she saw a man approaching her.

The man then spoke to the victim and sexually assaulted her before running away in the direction of Priory Road.

Banbury CID are appealing to anyone who recognises the man depicted in the e-fit or who has further information.

Detective Ruth Ivins of Banbury CID said: "Specially trained officers are continuing to offer their support to the victim and detectives are working to locate the offender."

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• The explosion at the block of flats in Gibbs Crescent on February 14 (Picture by Alexander Hammonds)

Police conclude on-site investigations

By George Welch

POLICE officers have left the scene of an explosion in west Oxford after completing their on-site investigations.

Thames Valley Police confirmed on Thursday last week that it had completed its work at Gibbs Crescent as investigations move away from the site of destruction where a three-storey block of flats was flattened.

At around 4.45pm on February 14, emergency services were called to Gibbs Crescent, following an explosion and fire.

Following the Valentine's Day blast, a multi-agency operation was launched to make the area safe and to carry out investigation work.

A post-mortem examination into

human remains found in the rubble of the collapsed block of flats has proved 'inconclusive', police have said.

Emergency crews have scoured the rubble near the marina and the remains are believed to be that of 'missing' man Guido Schuette.

The force issued a public appeal for the 48-year-old, who officially remains missing, on February 9.

Mr Schuette's family has been informed and are continuing to be offered support from officers.

Thames Valley Police neighbourhood officers have been patrolling Gibbs Crescent to offer support to residents.

The force last week launched a recovery co-ordination group, which will be headed up by Oxford City Council and the site has been handed over to Oxford City Council

and housing association A2Dominion.

A2Dominion has a site office and support officers to assist residents who have remained at Gibbs Crescent, and ongoing support is being given by A2D to those who have been displaced by this incident.

Tim Sadler, city council's executive director for community services, who is chairing the recovery co-ordination group, said: "The group will include representatives from the police, A2D, social care, the NHS and other agencies if and when necessary."

"Its role is to oversee and co-ordinate the return of the area to a state of normality as quickly and safely as possible, and to co-ordinate responses to the needs of residents who have been affected by the emergency."

Fleeing Oxford raises £13k for charity

OXFORD students travelled more than 27,000 miles in 36 hours raising over £12,800 for charities.

The 27 teams set off at 6am on Saturday with no money and relying only on the goodwill of passers by to help them get as far away as possible.

Two of this year's jailbreakers have raised £1,007.66, reaching Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium.

Third year students Eleanor Holt and Chevonne van Rhee set off on their challenge with very little else than the goal to get as far away from Oxford as possible by 6pm on Sunday.

The pair had no money, tickets, or passes, but just 36 hours to complete their challenge.

They were busy in the run-up to the big day, collecting more than £500 from their bake sale on February 21, and featuring on the radio the very same day.

All the cash raised goes straight to charity and half of the cash to charities based in Oxford.

The charities to receive the donations are Oxford Homeless Pathways, Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis, Student Minds, and the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative.



• Eleanor Holt and Chevonne van Rhee managed to get to Belgium without any cash as part of the Oxford jailbreak

Before embarking on the challenge, they said: "We are inspired by the work of these charities, and think they are hugely deserving of your support."

"Obviously these are quite big targets, so at the moment we are trying to raise as much awareness as possible."

"We think it's a fantastic and pretty unusual opportunity to raise money and much-needed awareness for four really deserving

charities, so at the moment we're mostly excited, if a little apprehensive about the size of the challenge we've set ourselves."

"But we think getting even close to those goals would be really worthwhile."

Jailbreak is RAG's biggest event of the year, with past students reaching all over the UK, Europe, and beyond, from Poland to Budapest to Istanbul, to Tokyo and South Africa.

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• Oxford City Farm members receive their cheque from the Big Lottery Fund

Funding boost leads to Fun on the Farm

By Eva Astreinidou

A CHARITY bidding to establish a working community-based farm in Oxford is celebrating after receiving more than £3,000 from the Big Lottery Fund to run a community event later this year.

Oxford City Farm said it was "delighted" to receive a large cheque of £3,018.50 to help organise their Fun on the Farm community event

on October 8.

The group was the last in England to receive funding from the Big Lottery Fund's Celebrate programme, which aims to help local groups hold events or activities to bring people together and celebrate what makes their community 'special'.

The project aims to change a brownfield site on Cornwallis Road into a farm that works with the community

including schools, educating them about food, farming and the future.

Sally Mullard, volunteer fundraising co-ordinator for Oxford City Farm, said: "We're delighted to have received this funding.

"The focus for the day will be on celebrating all the work our volunteers, steering group and supporters have put into securing a wonderful new green space

for the local community.

"We have lots of fun food-related activities planned including bring-a-plate picnic, apple pressing, music, and craft activities for kids and lots more.

"It will also be a great opportunity for local people to see the site and share their ideas about how the farm will develop."

The funding will also help the farm to build two toilets for the site and employ an event

co-ordinator and community artist to help organise and run the event.

The trustees of Oxford City Farm also announced the signing of a 40-year lease on a 2.3 acre piece of land in the Florence Park area of East Oxford last week.

The group said: "The lease enables us to get on the land and get stuck into the work of bringing city farming to Oxford."

Burglars with machete being sought by cops

A PAIR of raiders armed with a machete kicked in a Bampton man's door and stole his shotguns.

The victim, a man in his 30s, told police he was alone in his Station Road home when a man knocked on his door at around 10.20pm on February 19.

He was on the phone at the time and saw the man through the window, but did not answer.

About 10 minutes later his front door was kicked in and the intruder, armed with a machete, threatened the victim and 'demanded items', police said.

The machete-wielding burglar, a white man, was then joined by a black man, described as around 6ft tall with dreadlocks.

Police said the white man was wearing a dark woolly hat with a scarf around his face, a dark coat with the hood pulled up, khaki or blue trousers and bright yellow running shoes.

The pair stole three shotguns and cartridges, before driving off in a small dark-coloured hatchback car.

The victim was not hurt.

Det Insp Richard Pickering, from Banbury Force CID, said: "I understand the theft of these items may cause concern in the community, but there is no information to suggest the stolen items will be used in connection with a particular incident."

Contact police on 101.

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Campaign urging men to talk about mental problems

By Eva Astrienidou

AN MP is backing a five-year campaign by Time to Change that aims to 'break the cycle' of men feeling unable to talk about mental health issues, after alarming figures reveal that suicide is the biggest killer in males under 45.

On Thursday last week, Time to Change launched their new five-year campaign In Your Corner, which urges friends to help their mates talk about mental health issues and be a person they can confide in.

Men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women.

Writing for The Huffington Post, Nicola Blackwood, MP and minister for public health and innovation, said: "The human cost is unacceptable and shows the need for swift action and a renewed focus at all levels - from central and local government, from charities and voluntary organisations."

The Oxford West and Abingdon member added: "Talking

about mental health issues can be daunting. I have seen firsthand how important it is to have someone they can confide in and trust."

She added: "I am determined that our mental health services are also somewhere people feel they can reach out to for help."

"We now have strengthened our cross-Government suicide prevention strategy, which specifically targets those most at risk like young and middle-aged men. We have worked with local authorities to make sure that every local area has a suicide prevention strategy in place by the end of 2017."

"So far 95 per cent of local authorities have or are developing one, which is a big step forward."

Jo Loughran, director of operations at Time to Change, said: "Our research clearly shows that mental health problems are just not on the radar for men."

"However, we also know that men feel strongly about brotherhood and friendship and can play a vital role in looking out for

their friends' mental health and wellbeing.

"We want to show that being in your friend's corner doesn't have to be difficult or awkward. Breaking the cycle of men feeling unable to reach out has never been more urgent. We need to help men realise they can make a real difference, even change someone's life."

Dan Knowles, CEO at Oxfordshire Mind, said: "We are deeply saddened with the most recent data and the ongoing trend in male suicide rates. Suicide in every age and gender bracket is a tragedy, and more work must be done to understand those people at risk. Of course, we will continue to support them when they need it."

"We were pleased with the Prime Minister's announcement earlier in the year surrounding the need for mental health reform and hope this will have an impact on these statistics."

In January, PM Theresa May committed to making mental health care a priority for this government.



Get your orange juices flowing

HELP Oxfordshire go orange this month and raise funds for Helen & Douglas House.

The charity, which helps terminally ill young people and their families, is asking individuals, groups, schools, colleges and businesses from across the county to Go Orange #hdhorange and to do something fun and eye-

catching to raise vital funds for the charity.

It could be anything from orange dress-down days to hair-dyeing, orange-themed suppers and decorated cupcakes. The more imaginative, bigger and brighter the idea the better!

Currently 50 small to medium businesses are

getting behind Go Orange, including businesses in Magdalen Road, where the hospice is located.

For more information visit hdh.org.uk, email fundraising@helenanddouglas.org.uk or call 01865 799150.

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Support the Oxfordshire Guardian's charity of the year – Play2Give Team set to take on monster of a race

By George Welch

A TEAM of five will tackle the might of next month's Monster Race to support our charity of the year, Play2Give, in its 10th anniversary year.

Leaseguard Group Ltd, based at Unipart House in Garsington Road, Cowley, Oxford, has assembled a squad to defeat the mighty obstacle assault run at Cornbury Park in west Oxfordshire on April 1.

Funds raised will help P2G support local people in need.

The contract lifecycle management company, which has been running for 25 years, helps NHS Trusts generate savings on their maintenance and leasing contracts.

The team, led by Lee Edwards, from Didcot, also includes Lesley Saunders, Jonathan Wickens, and husband and wife pair Charlie and Martyn Sadler. They hope to raise £400.

The Monster Race will involve the fabulous five taking on a range of obstacles in 5k or 10k races, which all include lots of mud and water, and the bog of eternal stench.

Lee, who has been friends with P2G's founder Andrew

THE OXFORD PAPER
and
**Oxfordshire
Guardian**
Charity of the year 2017
Play2Give

Baker, from Didcot, since they met in 2008, said: "Andrew's an inspiration. We are all honoured to take part in the gruelling challenge to support him and this fantastic cause."

"Andrew has worked tirelessly (with the support of others) to raise extraordinary amounts of money."

"There have been some really fantastic initiatives, such as football tournaments that I have had the pleasure of playing in. Andrew's energy and dedication despite his own challenges never cease to amaze."

P2G has raised £55,670 for a catalogue of local charities since Andrew formed the fundraising organisation in September 2007. Of this, the children's hospital has benefited from more than £40,000.

Born with a brain injury, Andrew has been raising



• Raring to go in the Monster Race are, from left, Lesley Saunders, Lee Edwards, Charlie Sadler and Jonathan Elsmore Wickens

money for charity since the age of 14 in 2003 when he was inspired by treatment he received. He had major brain surgery aged 12 for a tumour that developed following a head injury four years earlier.

The funds Leaseguard raise will go into P2G's £10k in 10 appeal this year as part of its 10th anniversary charity campaign.

The Children's Hospital at the John Radcliffe and brain injury charity Headway Oxfordshire will also benefit from the Monster Run.

To sponsor the Leaseguard team, visit tinyurl.com/z5sj98w.

P2G has already raised over £1,900 in its £10k in 10 appeal. To donate, visit tinyurl.com/zksd8xx.

Hospital honour for P2G

A ROOM at Oxford Children's Hospital (Chox) will be named in honour of Play2Give (P2G) and unveiled next week as testament to the charity's decade of efforts.

The room at Melanie's Ward was due to be opened under its new name yesterday, with celebrations to mark the contribution of P2G coinciding with the charity's 10th anniversary year.

The P2G room is on Melanie's Ward, where teenagers stay at the hospital.

To name the room, the charity had to raise £40,000.

Now the hospital is recognising the charity's 'long term contribution and philanthropy' after the organisation's years of support.

Andrew Baker, founder of the charity, said: "It was a lovely sentiment for Play2Give's efforts to be valued and recognised in such a special way."

"Never did we think we would achieve this, so to see it become 'real' in that the name of the organisation

becomes a lasting legacy is truly the proudest and most amazing achievement in both that of P2G and my fundraising's history."

Speaking of future plans with the hospital, Andrew said the charity will continue to fundraise to help provide the very best and the latest medical equipment and facilities "above and beyond NHS standards".

He also mentioned that the accolade was extra special as Mya, 14, who is the daughter of P2G's Dale Harris, will benefit from the room throughout her teenage years.

P2G has raised funds through events, by taking part in fun runs and through campaigns like Sleigh2Give, which aims to bring joy and Christmas cheer to the young patients.

Andrew added: "We are truly thankful to the hospital charity and the ward for giving us this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It isn't just given to anyone."

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- To unload and load a wide range of vehicle types, moving waste materials between storage and processing areas, assisting the team with segregation and storage of wastes.
- Helping to keep the site clean and tidy whilst promoting high standards towards work, and health and safety.

The successful person will have an Industrial Telehandler FLT (below 9 meters) License.

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Roads cash boost for 'vulnerable'

A TOTAL of £239,000 has been awarded to Oxfordshire for schemes to improve road journeys and help reduce congestion.

The funds were granted by the Department of Transport and will help provide real-time parking information for Blue Badge holders, as well as support for people with disabilities.

The amount is part of £4m awarded to 19 councils for technology that will improve road travel through apps and sensors, with the capacity to give motorists advance notice of congestion and notify them of free parking spaces.

The technology could be used to cut congestion and improve parking in city centres.

John Howell MP for Henley, said: "It is good to see Oxfordshire getting one of the highest bids for projects. I am sure these will make a big difference to travellers and it is good to see technology being brought into use at an early stage."

Roads minister Andrew Jones MP, said: "I congratulate the cutting-edge, innovative ideas. Technology is rapidly evolving and this important work shows that if we get it right, it can cut congestion, speed up journeys, clean up the environment and improve accessibility."

Ponds to spice up park

• Volunteers count fish as part of an earlier Wild Banbury project

By Samantha McGregor

A WILDLIFE charity wants to build three ponds to improve Spiceball Park in Banbury.

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, BBOWT, has submitted proposals to create the water features on rough grassland.

One will include a pond dipping deck as well as educational signs aimed at getting

local people involved in nature. The area will also be used for outdoor learning sessions by local schools.

BBOWT has teamed up with Banbury Town Council to create Wild Banbury, a volunteer group aimed at improving wildlife areas across the town.

The project has been funded through grants from Heritage Lottery Fund, Grondon Waste Management, Banbury town

and Cherwell district councils.

If the planning application is approved work on the first two larger ponds could start this summer.

In a report, BBOWT said Spiceball Park did not have any ponds that were separate to the River Cherwell.

It said: "Ponds have rich flora and fauna and provide habitat for a variety of species such as amphibians and invertebrates.

"They also have the potential to attract and support legally protected species such as great crested newts and various bat species.

"The new wildlife ponds will not be stocked with fish, therefore they will be able to support breeding populations of amphibians.

"All works will be undertaken in as environmentally sensitive a way as possible."

News Bites

Assault charges

BICESTER: Two people have been charged after four people were allegedly assaulted at a house in Hamilton Close on February 18.

Fergie Suika, 19, from Lena Crescent, Enfield, London, faces four counts of assault by beating, and a 16-year-old boy, also from London, has been charged with one count.

Both have appeared at Banbury Magistrates' Court. Suika was remanded in custody and the juvenile released on conditional bail.

Business advice

THAME: Anyone starting a business can get free face-to-face advice from Oxford Business Enterprise.

For more information or to book an appointment, visit oxonbe.co.uk

New defibrillator

THAME: A defibrillator has been installed at Racquets Fitness Centre in North Street as part of a community initiative.

The club has been raising money for the past two years to pay for the life-saving equipment.

Fitness centre owner Simon Martin said: "I'd like to dedicate this defibrillator to my dad Richard Martin who died one year ago of cancer."

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Could you help teach a child to read?

EVEN in an area such as Oxfordshire, many children have trouble reading, but help is at hand through a volunteering charity.

ARCh Oxfordshire helps hundreds of youngsters each year by finding volunteers to work with them in schools and help bring the joy of reading to them.

Teachers choose the children

most in need of help – some have lost confidence, are shy or don't communicate well, others don't speak English at home and some just need a boost to help them catch up.

ARCh – Assisted Reading for Children in Oxfordshire – recruits, trains and supports volunteers in primary schools

through individual sessions each week with their volunteer helper.

Volunteers aim to make children feel happy reading and to think of it as something they can enjoy.

As well as reading they play word, board and memory games and draw – all things designed to help boost their confidence.

But the charity is now looking for more volunteers to help the project with training schemes on March 7 and 8 and May 9 and 10.

Volunteers are expected to help in a primary school for one-and-a-half hours twice a week – after attending two training sessions – and commit to helping at a school for a year.

ARCh is looking for volunteers to help in Oxford city – particularly the Cowley, Littlemore, Blackbird Leys areas – and in Witney, Abingdon, Didcot, Bicester and Banbury.

They are also asking companies to get involved – working in partnership with ARCh will combine staff development with

community outreach, using an established training and placement programme to achieve maximum impact in terms of staff development, staff morale and community perception, all while helping youngsters read.

For more information on volunteering, go to their website: archoxfordshire.org.uk.

What a difference a book makes

AFTER a hugely enjoyable 40-year career spent in professional communications, last summer I decided to 'step off the business run mill', writes David Jones.

My 'retirement plan' was like all good communications – uncomplicated and unambiguous. More time spent pursuing my hobbies of watching sport, keeping fit, travelling and reading.

I deemed I would 'put a bit back into the community' through volunteering and literacy was an area where I'd always felt I could best use my skills and experience. But where should I start?

I warmed to the idea of working with an adult learning group, attracted by the thought of helping people who leave school with little or no reading and writing skills.

But if adult literacy groups

offer hope of a cure for illiteracy, I couldn't help feeling that helping children to read before they leave school can actively prevent the problem – and prevention is always better than cure!

So when I learned that ARCh provide Assisted Reading for Children in more than 100 primary schools throughout my home county I knew that this was the volunteering opportunity I'd been looking for.

I was unashamedly excited by the prospect of belonging to an organisation that is dedicated to making a lasting difference to the lives of children in Oxfordshire by inspiring them to discover the joy of reading.

After completing ARCh's training support programme, I was seconded to a school in Wallingford where I was

introduced to the Year Five boys who have become my Three Musketeers.

Two were 'reluctant readers' who lacked confidence while the other was said to "bark at print" and show little interest in books. In the three months we've read together, reading confidence has improved noticeably to the point where they happily read aloud in class.

The boy who barked at print – what a great book title that would make – has, to our mutual delight, read six books including a 300-page novel.

Becoming a volunteer reader is truly one of the most inspiring and rewarding things I have ever done. And to think, I never really believed the adage that our schooldays are the best time of our lives.

Thanks to ARCh – I do now!



• David Jones helps a pupil at St Johns Primary in Wallingford to love reading

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Get In the Mood for great music

NOT many bands play a variety of music from Abba to Glenn Miller but that's exactly what you can expect from a concert in Banbury.

The John Cleveland Band is an ensemble of 16-20 talented musicians who can please most music lovers, playing music from stage, screen, pop and more.

Their warm and personal interaction with their audience, together with an excellent standard of performance, make for a great night of entertainment for all at St Mary's Church on Saturday.

Based in Hinckley, Leicestershire, the John Cleveland Band play extensively in nearby Northamptonshire and further afield, including Europe. Performances include concerts and dinner dances of a private and charitable nature.

Having started in 1976 as an extra-curricular activity at the John Cleveland College school, they evolved into an adult band and have just celebrated their 40th year.

Tickets for Eric Darlington with the John Cleveland Band are £10. They are on sale at St Mary's Box Office (01295 253329 between 9.45 and 11am, Monday to Friday), Banbury Tourist Information Centre (01295 753752), and also on 07410 550649.

The concert starts at 7.30pm and ends around 10pm.

Landlord slapped with £20,000 fine over poor housing

By Eva Astreinidou

AN OXFORD landlord has been served with a large bill after being caught running an unlicensed and poorly managed house in multiple occupation (HMO).

Asad Shazad, 37, of Cross Street, was fined £20,000 when he appeared before Oxford Magistrates' Court on Tuesday last week. Costs added another £1,695 to his bill.

An environmental health officer from Oxford City Council visited the property on Moorbank in Blackbird Leys in July last year and found the two-storey property being occupied by six people.

The house was found to be poorly maintained and the landlord had failed to take the necessary fire safety precautions that are required in an HMO.

Shazad was found guilty of four breaches of the HMO management regulations and fined £2,000 per breach, including failing to display his details in a prominent location within the



• The property was run as an unlicensed house in multiple occupation

property or taking the necessary fire safety precautions.

He was also fined £12,000 for the operation of an unlicensed HMO.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, board member for planning and regulatory services at the city council, said: "I'm delighted that the courts have imposed a substan-



tial fine in this case to deter other landlords from renting out unlicensed and unsafe properties."



Kebab team are van-tastic

THAME-BASED Atalay Kebab has beaten the competition to win a top prize at the British Kebab Awards.

The event, at a swanky ceremony in London on Sunday, awarded Turkish-born Russel Atalay the prestigious Kebab Van of the Year title.

The High Street van was founded by Russel in 1988. The business is now being run by

his two sons. It was nominated by fast food enthusiast Dom Stanway-Williams, who decided to travel around the world in search of a taste better than his hometown doner kebab.

After being nominated the van received huge praise from users of the Kebab Awards website who were blown away by Atalay's lamb kebab.

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Work begins on new homes at Bretch Hill

By Samantha McGregor

WORK to build new homes at the site of a former church in Bretch Hill is set to start after a £1.44m contract was awarded.

A total of 11 new two and three-bedroom homes will be constructed at The Fairway, in Hope Close, Banbury.

The homes will be part of the council's Build! Programme, a self-build scheme to help North Oxfordshire residents get on to the housing ladder.

It comes after Cherwell District Council appointed Edgar Taylor (Buckingham) Limited to build the shared ownership homes.

The council's executive approved the contract last month.

Cherwell acquired the land from the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes as part of a development agreement for the site.

It included demolition of the old Fairway Methodist Church and

provision of a replacement building, which has now been completed.

Cllr John Donaldson, Cherwell's lead member for housing, said: "This land had become a large derelict site, with a disused church at the front and untended land to the rear."

"Through the Build! project we have been able to bring this land back into use; the church now once again serving members of the community, while the homes will provide affordable housing at a great location in Banbury."

"Now the works for the church are complete, we have appointed Edgar Taylor to carry out the next stage of the development. Once works are complete, we will be able to hand over these properties to their future owners who will be able to put the finishing touches and create their very own dream home."

The shared ownership homes will be sold on a 'self-finish' basis whereby buyers get a discount

on the market value in return for completing the homes. This ranges from fitting bathrooms and kitchens to decorating and hanging doors and skirting board.

These homes will be built to Passivhaus standards, which includes eco measures and improved insulation to help reduce heating costs.

The development is being carried out in two phases. Phase one, which has already begun, includes the 11 building's substructure, the provision of utilities and an estate road.

The contract approved last week paves the way for the completion of the development's superstructure as part of phase two.

Sean Woodcock, Banbury Labour group leader, said: "I am very pleased with this development and look forward to it."

"The key will be insuring that property infrastructure is in place and that contributions from the developer are sufficient for what the area needs."

Fresh appeal for missing man



• Mark Robinson

POLICE have issued a fresh appeal for information about a man who has been missing from his Oxfordshire home since last month.

Mark Robinson, aged 53, from Crowell, in Chinnor, was last seen on Thursday, January 26, at about 7am in Chinnor Road.

He was wearing a suit and a grey overcoat and carrying a black leather shoulder bag.

He is described as white, 6ft tall, of medium build, with balding grey hair.

Mark has access to a grey Mazda 3 vehicle and may have travelled to West Yorkshire, West Midlands, Cumbria, Lancashire or Scotland.

PC Neil McGrath said Mr Robinson's family was "extremely worried for his welfare".

He said: "The force has still not been able to make contact with Mark since he went missing last month."

"We are urging motorists to keep a look out for anyone matching the description of Mark Robinson driving a grey Mazda 3."

"Mark, if you see this appeal, please make contact with Thames Valley Police so we can let your friends and family know you are safe and well."

Anyone with information about Mr Robinson should call 101.

Camera clue to raid on newsagent



• Police would like information on the people in these CCTV images

POLICE have released security camera images after a newsagent's flat was burgled.

Five people went into the shop in West Street, Chipping Norton, where some of the group "distracted" the owner while others crept upstairs to a flat.

They broke in and stole a safe containing cash and an undisclosed amount of money.

Police said all members of the group then left the shop.

The incident happened at about 10.30am on Monday, January 30, however, the CCTV footage has only just been released by police.

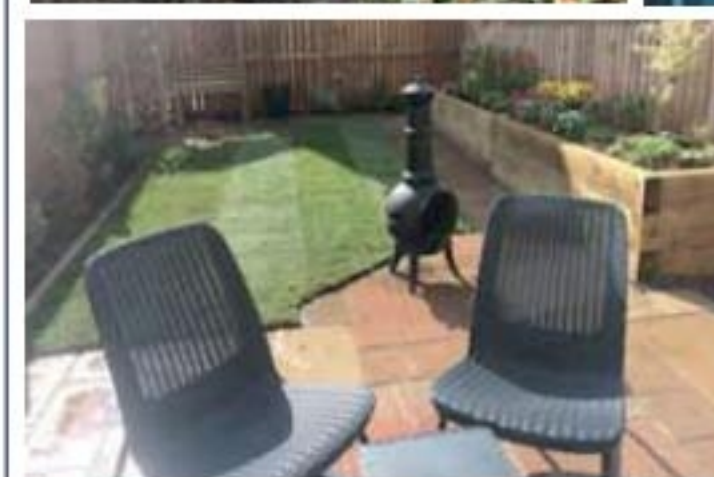
They are appealing for anyone with any information about the burglary or anyone who recognises the people shown in the image to contact PC Adam Clark.

Call 101 and quote the reference 43170029091, or alternatively ring Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.



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To be in with a chance of winning a family ticket just answer the following simple question:

Q: What is the name of the new LEGOLAND Pirate stunt show?

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Competition

WIN family tickets to Gulliver's

Eggs-travagant Easter fun for everyone at Gulliver's this spring!

WE'VE teamed up with Gulliver's family theme parks to give away 3 family tickets for unforgettable days out this Easter.

Throughout Gulliver's Easter Extravaganza, there are lots of 'eggstra' special activities planned at Gulliver's World in Warrington, Gulliver's Kingdom in Matlock Bath and Gulliver's Land in Milton Keynes.

Over the four day Easter bank holiday weekend there will be some very special appearances from the Easter Bunny plus amazing entertainment for you and your little chicks. Join the Gully Gang and enjoy Easter themed competitions and entertainment on the main stage, including the Easter Bunny Parade and the ultimate in springtime fun - the Big Bunny Bounce!

Gulliver's theme parks are open daily throughout their Easter Extravaganza which runs from 1st to 23rd April*, with a super selection of rides,

Closing date: Friday, March 24.

shows and attractions to discover, all devised for children aged two to 13.

Car parking is always free at Gulliver's and there is a great selection of food on offer.



For full details of opening times and to book, visit www.gulliversfun.co.uk.

Win tickets

To be in with a chance of winning a family ticket for four people to visit Gulliver's this Easter, answer this simple question.

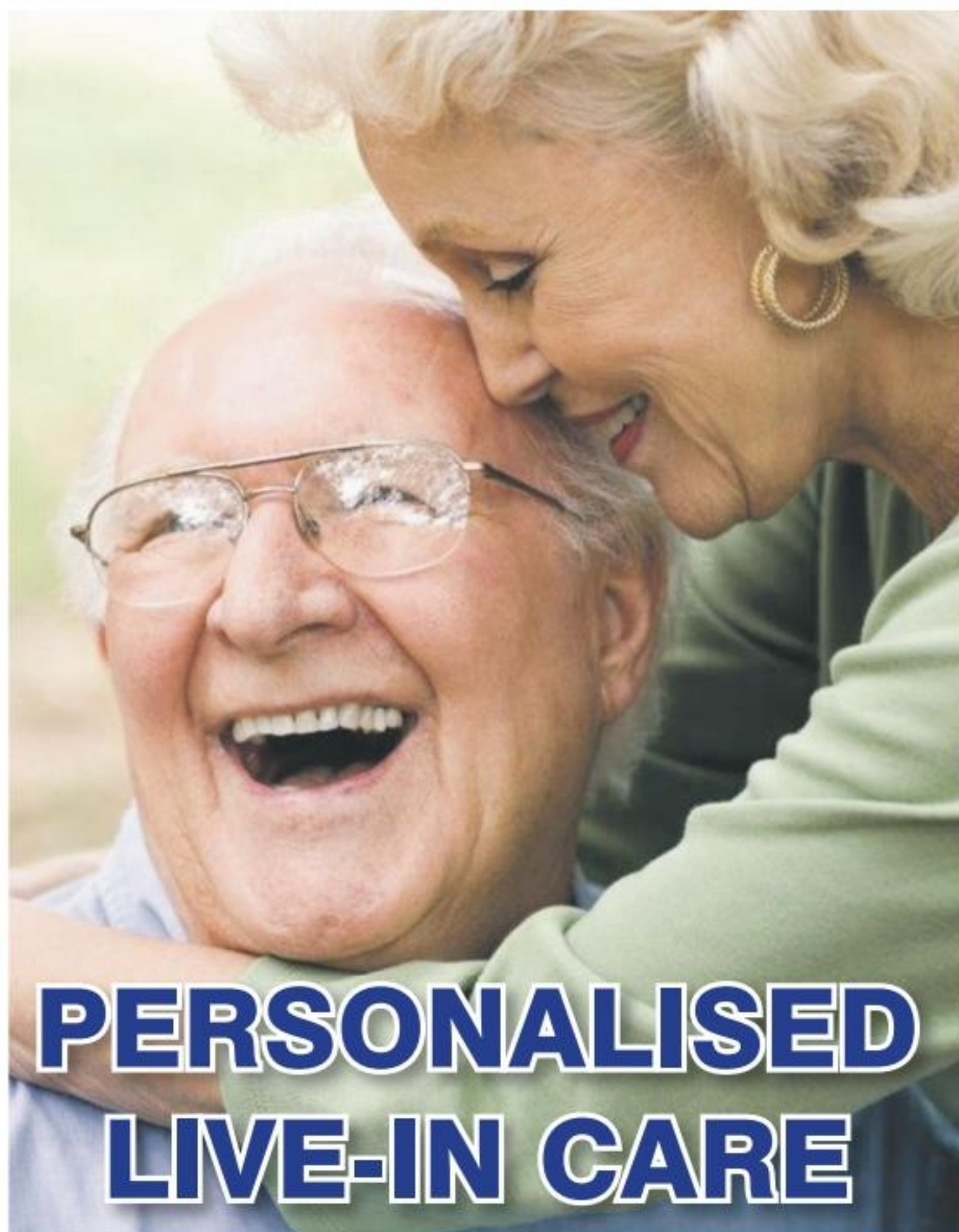
Q: Which of these young animals isn't associated with Easter?

Bunny, Chick or Kitten?

T&Cs apply. See online entry form for details.

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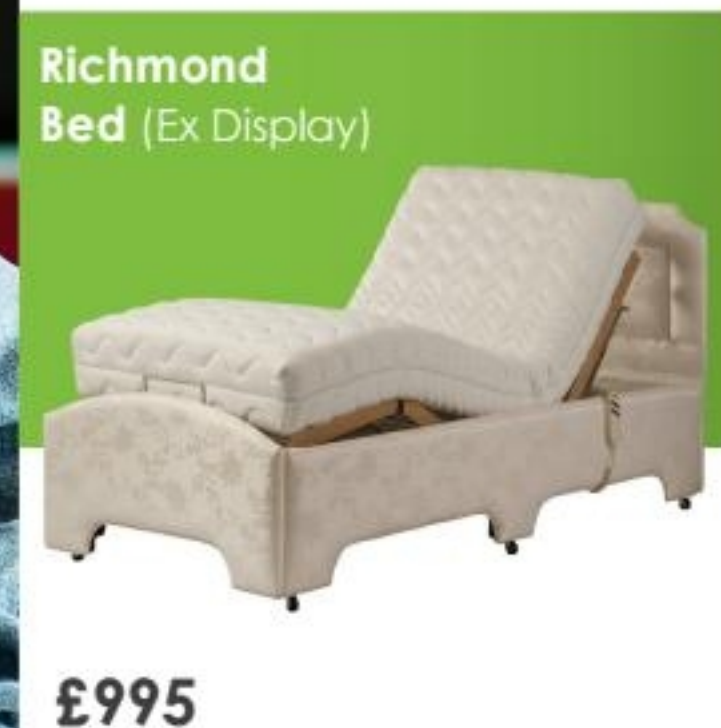
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Puzzles



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Quick Clues Across

- 1 Over-generous (4-7)
- 9 Long fish (3)
- 10 Expedient (9)
- 11 Ends (5)
- 13 Letter (7)
- 14 Waterlogged (6)
- 16 Calm (6)
- 18 Unaffected (7)
- 19 Attacked (5)
- 20 Transport for the wounded (9)
- 21 Kind of vegetable (3)
- 22 Indicating dissent (4-7)

Quick Clues Down

- 2 Lubricate (3)
- 3 Snares (5)
- 4 Grudges (6)
- 5 Pause (7)
- 6 Makes hostile (9)
- 7 Emotional (11)
- 8 Showing deep respect (11)
- 12 Touchy (9)
- 15 Came with a crash (7)
- 17 Settle conclusively (6)
- 19 Fracture (5)
- 21 Peg of wood or metal (3)

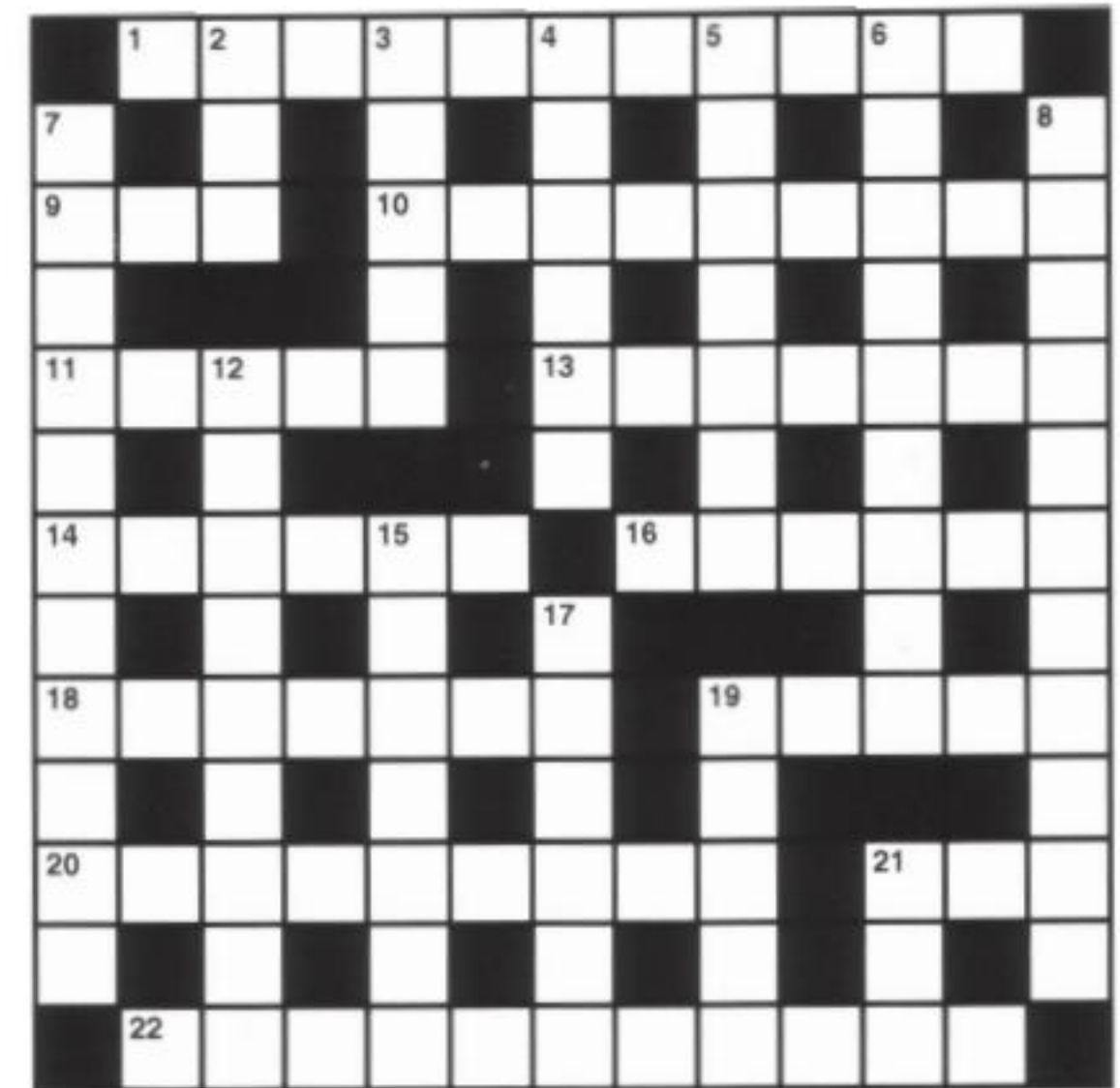
Scribble space

Cryptic Clues Across

- 1 Makes a monopoly with a sound foundation (11)
- 9 Strikingly away from home (3)
- 10 Urge to disturb the giant site (9)
- 11 Legend has it she made her own tombstone (5)
- 13 Steam is the making of a French 14 (7)
- 14 Expert with disturbed traits (6)
- 16 A three-mile alliance (6)
- 18 I and a friend took it to copy (7)
- 19 French word and music (5)
- 20 But you won't often write music on it (9)
- 21 Like the other inmates of 21 down, it is said (3)
- 22 Strong positions for the principal card players? (11)

Cryptic Clues Down

- 2 To a different type of corn (3)
- 3 A piano is excellent for yielding sound (5)
- 4 It will make me sure to start again (6)
- 5 Sounds as if this will be prickly (7)
- 6 An adjacent spectacle can cause myopia (4,5)
- 7 Female supporters? (11)
- 8 It's respectful to face round the fee mixed up with the rent (11)
- 12 He ought to be well equipped (9)
- 15 Trod forcibly - nearly caused a beastly rush (7)
- 17 One keeps one's ear close to the place of worship (6)
- 19 Code for the majority round head of state (5)
- 21 Paid shortly about nothing for the case (3)



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Puzzles



Sudoku

The objective is to fill a 9×9 grid with digits so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3×3 sub-grids that compose the grid (also called "boxes", "blocks", "regions", or "sub-squares") contains all of the digits from 1 to 9. The puzzle setter provides a partially completed grid, which for a well-posed puzzle has a unique solution.

EASY/MEDIUM/HARD

	1	9			3	6		
		8	5				4	2
	6		1	7				5
9	7	6		8	4			
	2						3	
			9	5		8	6	7
3				4	1		2	
4	8				9	5		
			1	2		7	8	

5	6		9		2		4	3
			6	4	7			
	7			5			2	
6								2
	1						9	
4								7
	9			6			1	
			3	8	5			
2	8		1		9		3	6

	2		9					
5				7				8
	9	6	1			2		
					2		9	4
		3				6		
6	7		5					
		7			1	3	5	
	6			3				2
					8		4	

This week's solutions

7	2	4	9	8	3	5	6	1
8	9	6	1	5	4	2	7	3
5	3	1	2	7	6	4	8	9
1	5	8	3	6	2	7	9	4
9	7	4	8	5	3	6	2	1
6	5	7	4	9	1	3	8	2
4	3	9	5	2	8	1	6	7
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Quick Crossword
 Across: 1 Soft-hearted 9 Eel 10 Advisable 11 Tails 13 Epistle 14 Marshy 17 Serene 18 Natural 19 Beset 20 Ambulance 21 Pea 22 Head-shaking
 Down: 2 Oil 3 Traps 4 Envis 5 Respite 6 Emitters 7 Sentimental 8 Reverent 12 Irritable 15 Hurdled 17 Clutch 19 Break 21 Pin

Cryptic Crossword
 Across: 1 Cornerstone 9 Out 10 Instigate 11 Noble 13 Maltose 14 Artist 16 League 18 Inmate 19 Motel 20 Newspaper 21 Pea 22 Bridgeheads
 Down: 2 Oat 3 Noise 4 Resume 5 Thistle 6 Near sight 7 Foundations 8 Defiant 12 Outfitter 15 Stamped 17 Temple 19 Morse 21 Pod

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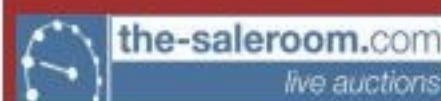
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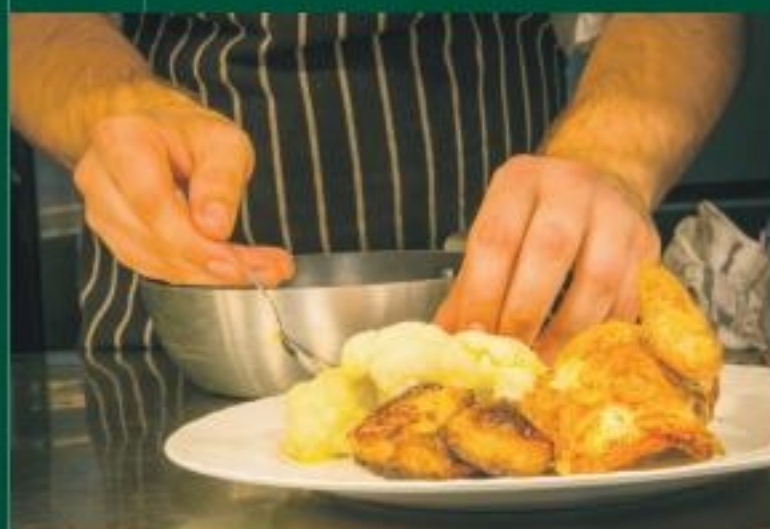
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The EastEnd villain with a heart of gold



Actor Larry Lamb may be best known on our TV screens for his portrayal as Archie Mitchell but as he reveals he was a late developer when it came to acting. See inside for more
 Picture: @larrylamb47

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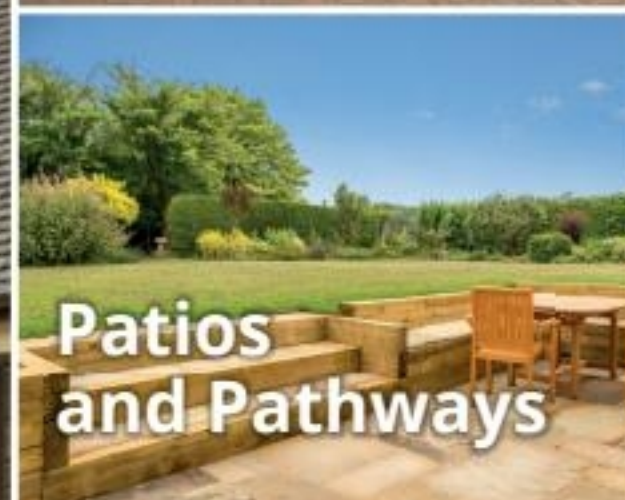
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ENTERTAINMENT & LISTINGS

EastEnders actor a late developer

By James Richings

FROM villain to down-to-earth dad, Larry Lamb has played a real mix of characters.

The 69-year-old is probably best known for portraying the evil Archie Mitchell on EastEnders and Mick in Gavin & Stacey, and will be sharing his story when he arrives at The Beacon in Wantage on Friday, March 10.

But instead of telling the Portway audience what he thinks they want to hear, Larry comes to Oxfordshire with a different approach.

"My life has had an extraordinary range of facets," he said.

"So the evening depends on what people really want to know because I'm going to base the night on questions that I want the audience to ask me.

"I've spent a lot of time answering people's questions and I find it a more direct approach in connecting with them.

"For about 50 years I've found my

way living around the world doing what I do and other things that I did before - there's a lot to talk about."

Some things though will be off limits: "Obviously, I'll be a bit worried if they want to know too much about me but I wrote a book about my life in 2010 which came out in 2011.

"I exposed as much of my personal life as I can - so if they want to know stuff that's really personal, they should read the book."

Larry will talk about life before the world of entertainment - from working in the waste paper business, to being an unsuccessful salesman, then a construction worker before working in the oil business. But it was one day in Canada in his late 20s/early 30s that changed his life.

He also advised any aspiring actor to 'have a second string to their bow', as he believes the world is 'over populated with actors'.

"I certainly didn't want to go into acting when I was a kid," Larry told the Guardian.

"Somebody suggested to me that I should be an actor but I had never really thought about it before to be honest with you.

"I had no ambition to be one.

"But this person took me to an amateur theatre group where I decided to have a go. I found out it was something that I liked, so it gradually became a hobby.

"So it was through amateur theatre that I got involved in the entertainment business."

He added: "I think the important thing to remember is that you can love and enjoy acting without doing it for a living.

"But if you figure out that being an actor is what you want to do for a job, you better be aware that probably 90 per cent of actors are unemployed at any one time, anywhere in the world.

"The entertainment business should come with a great big warning sign on it - it's not for the faint hearted."

Tickets cost £16 and it starts at 8pm.



Anything but the Blues

One of Reading's most popular cover bands will be gigging in Oxford next week.

Jukes Blues, who first formed in 2008, will perform at The White House on Abingdon Road on Saturday, March 11, where they'll showcase some of the finest blues tunes from years gone by.

The five-piece will also show off some of their self-penned tracks and hope their debut gig at the venue will go down a storm.

When discussing the band's name, keyboardist George Darling said, "The band's name is meant to convey that while the blues underpins what we do we have broad tastes in music.

"We don't want to be pigeonholed too much, hence the allusion to the variation you might find in a jukebox.

Jukes Blues are made up of vocalist Laura Jones, George Darling on the keyboards, guitarist Mike Bishop, Chris Curtis on the bass and drummer Mike Goff.

"You could say that three of the band (Mike B, Mike G and Chris) are full-time musicians since they have all retired from the day job," George jokingly told the Guardian.

"But Laura and myself aren't.

"Laura is a manager in the retail part of Oxfam, and I'm a geoscientist with the Natural Environment Research Council."

The free gig starts at 9pm.

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ENTERTAINMENT & LISTINGS

Fred just wants to be human

By James Richings

FRED is just like you and me – he has legs, arms and feelings but is constantly faced with bigotry from humans.

But Fred the puppet has plans to end the prejudice when Meet Fred comes to the Old Fire Station in Oxford on Thursday, March 9.

Performed by the Hijinx Theatre Company, the production comes to the George Street venue as part of a small tour across the UK, after it's successful spell at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival last year.

And unlike many shows, Hijinx have hired actors with disabilities.

"We are an inclusive theatre company so therefore all our productions include learning disabled performers," artistic director Ben Pettitt-Wade told the Guardian.

"To support this we have a network of academies throughout Wales that train our performers in all sorts of skills to help them become professional performers.

"We develop all our shows in collaboration with the students on our academies."

Ben explained the production: "We focus on a guy called Fred who is a puppet and we look at the difficulties he faces in life because of that.

"It is also about who has control and power over Fred's life.

"We play with the parallel of the relationship Fred has with his puppeteers, in needing them simply to function, and the relationship many people with learning disability have with support workers which help them to live more independent lives.

"We then explore what can happen if this support is taken away, as it has been recently from many disabled people as their support packages have been cut back."

The story was a big hit at the Fringe last summer with many empathizing with Fred, despite the protagonist not even being a human.

And despite the puppeteers being clearly visible when Fred is on stage, Ben has no doubt that the Oxford audience will ignore them, and look at Fred as his own person.

"To be honest with you, the audience are very quick to recognise Fred in his own right, and feel a genuine empathy for him as he faces his struggles," he said.

"If they did not believe in him they would not feel that empathy.

"That said, puppetry is an extremely hard skill to master and we worked extremely hard during rehearsals to get it to the level it is at, to ensure that Fred was as much a part of the



cast as the other actors."

He added: "I hope the audience come away having had a great evening having laughed a lot, but also having learnt something about how difficult life can be if the vital support you need

is taken from you.

"I hope they leave a little bit angry about that.

Tickets cost £15 and it starts at 7.45pm.

Meet Fred is suitable for over 14s.

Putting the X Factor into Saturday night

MUSIC: Former X Factor winner Sam Bailey will be gigging at the New Theatre on Saturday.

The 39-year-old, who won the talent show in 2013, arrives at the George Street venue to perform tracks off her upcoming album *Sing My Heart Out*.

Tickets cost from £7.40 to £32.40.

Return visit for Vant

MUSIC: Indie rock band Vant will return to gig in Oxford on Sunday..

The four-piece will perform at the O2 Academy, 16 months after their set at the Bullingdon.

Vant will showcase tracks off their debut album *Dumb Blood*, which was released last month.

Doors open at 7pm and tickets cost £12.37.

Family fun flick

FILM: The latest Disney animated movie will be screened at The Beacon in Wantage on Saturday.

Moana, which stars Dwayne Johnson and Nicole Scherzinger, focuses on the title character who has been chosen to save the people on her island, which has recently been cursed.

Tickets £3, starts at 11am.



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ENTERTAINMENT & LISTINGS

Stornoway set to bow out

By James Richings

IT will be the end of an era when Stornoway gig at the New Theatre.

The four-piece alternative indie folk group from Oxford will conclude their farewell UK tour at the George Street venue next Sunday in front of what is expected to be a packed crowd.

So to give the group the perfect send off, keyboardist Jon Ouin revealed that the band didn't compile their final set list.

"We actually had a vote amongst our fans as to which of our songs they wanted us to play," Jon told the Guardian.

"So in terms of songs, they'll know roughly what to expect, but we're also aiming to pull the stops out in various other top secret ways and go out with a bang.

"And don't forget, it will be our last ever gig, so we will attempt to make it into a proper celebration of a decade we've had playing together."

Named after the town on the Isle of Lewis, Stornoway were formed after guitarist, lyricist and lead singer Brian Briggs met Jon at an Oxford college in the mid-2000s.

Originally focusing on their post graduate courses, Brian decided to share some of his self-penned tunes



Stornoway, from left, Oli Steadman, Brian Briggs, Rob Steadman and Jon Ouin

to Jon, who also had a mutual like for folk music. The two got together and were joined by brothers Oli (bass) and Rob (drums) Steadman.

After a number of gigs at small clubs around the city, their first major taste of success was in March 2006, when a demo version of I Saw You Blink was played on BBC Oxford Introducing.

But it wasn't until 2009 when Stornoway became a well-known name.

They had sets at Radio 1's Big Weekend, Glastonbury and on Later...with Jools Holland, where they became the first unsigned band to appear on the show alongside Jay Z, Sting and The Foo Fighters.

Jon said: "We are proud of what we've done as a band, the gigs we've

played and the albums and recordings we've made, but nowadays it just so happens that we're all leading very separate lives in different places now.

"Also, more to the point, we fundamentally loathe each other."

The concert will take place on Sunday, March 12 and tickets cost £22.15 to £27.15.

It starts at 7.30pm.

Expect some bad attitude at the O2

STOCKPORT-based band Dutch Uncles have continued with their tradition of releasing an album every two years.

Big Balloon, their fifth album in eight years, came out last month and they'll showcase the tunes at their debut gig at the O2 Academy on Wednesday, March 8 – their first gig in the city since their previous record, O Shudder, came out in 2015.

And with each album having a different sound, lead singer and pianist Duncan Wallis admitted he wasn't sure what genre his music is.

"That's your (the listener's) call to make," he said.

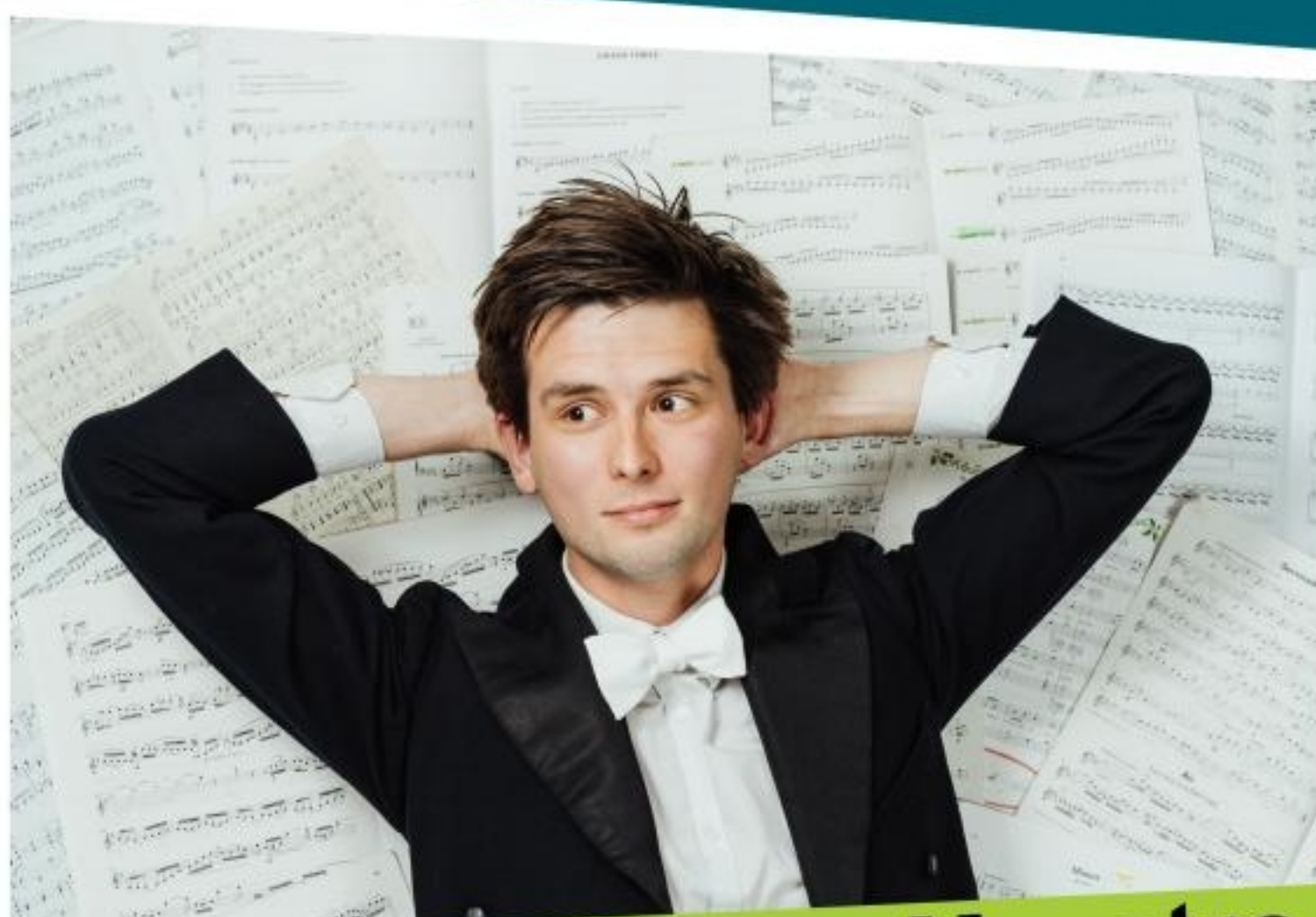
He added: "On the night, expect 18 slices of bad attitude. We're digging up some of the last few surprises from our back catalogue that have either gathered dust or never even been touched.

"So to anyone that's seen us in the last few years and feels familiar with some of our album tracks, there will even be something new for them too.

"On the whole though, we're trying to compliment the new record with our other choices and it's shaping up just lovely."

Tickets cost £11.25 and doors open at 6.30pm.

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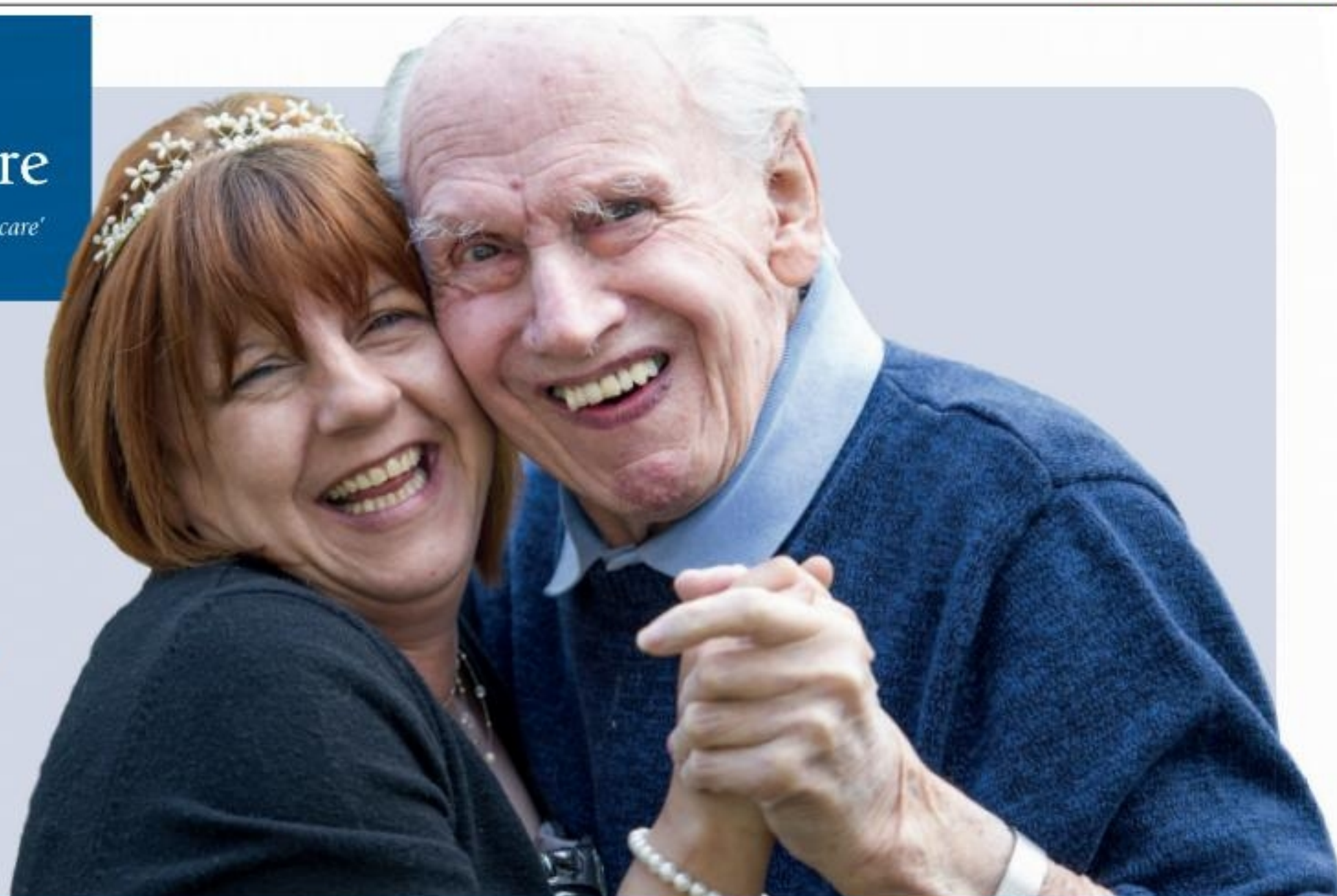
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Isuzu D-Max Arctic Truck AT35

Isuzu pick-up takes it to D-Max

By Tony Yates

FOR this week's review – I have decided to do a bit of Arctic Exploring – because the car I am testing is the Isuzu D-Max Arctic pick-up truck which is a vehicle festooned with large wheels, Botox bodywork and an engine that would if required, move the Polar Ice-Caps.

So, to keep things simple, I will refrain from going to the North or South Pole and instead drive a truck that was designed to work in an extreme environment around the county of Staffordshire while blocking all the roads and causing total havoc as I try to park something the size of a 747 in a little town called Uttoxeter.

POWER AND EFFICIENCY

The D-Max is powered by a 2.5 litre twin turbo diesel engine that has 160PS and 400Nm of torque. I won't go into too much detail regarding performance – as the D-Max is not about performance – it's about being a workhorse. But for those of you who want to know; Max speed comes in around 111mph and on the combined cycle - I was able to achieve 38mpg.

ON THE ROAD

Here, I think we should focus mainly on the D-Max's off-road abilities – so I shall start with that. I have a friend who owns a farm – and he had kindly let me use some of its muddy paths to see how it would fair compared to his Land Rover. Well, I have to say – the D-Max was pretty faultless really. But then again, that's mainly thanks to those large wheels which help improve the ride height massively. That raised ride height also means it will pretty much clamber over anything in its path.

Also, I always take a pre set route that can sometimes take me up to 200miles away from my starting point which is a good test to find out how the vehicle fared on normal roads as well as motorways. Well, I am happy to say it did a great job, apart from those massive tyres which do seem to make a lot of road noise. But, to be fair, the D-Max was actually a decent ride on normal roads. Although, the suspension was quite firm – but then I suppose it has to be because of what the D-Max was originally designed to do.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Inside was also kitted out very well, and here are some of the features you can expect to get as standard on the 'Arctic version' including: ABS + ESC, front, side & curtain airbags, height-adjustable front seatbelts, security-etched glass, Insurance-approved immobiliser, remote central locking, rear parking distance sensors, RDS radio/single CD with iPod®/USB/Bluetooth® connectivity, Six speakers which include 2 'Exciter' roof mounted speakers. Along with heated front screen, seats, steering wheel audio controls, cruise control and a Premium Black Leather Interior.

TO SUM UP

I really was impressed by the D-Max, yes it may look like a pick-up on Botox – but I'm telling you now – the D-Max is a decent buy.

Price from: £34,999



• Isuzu D-Max Arctic Truck AT35

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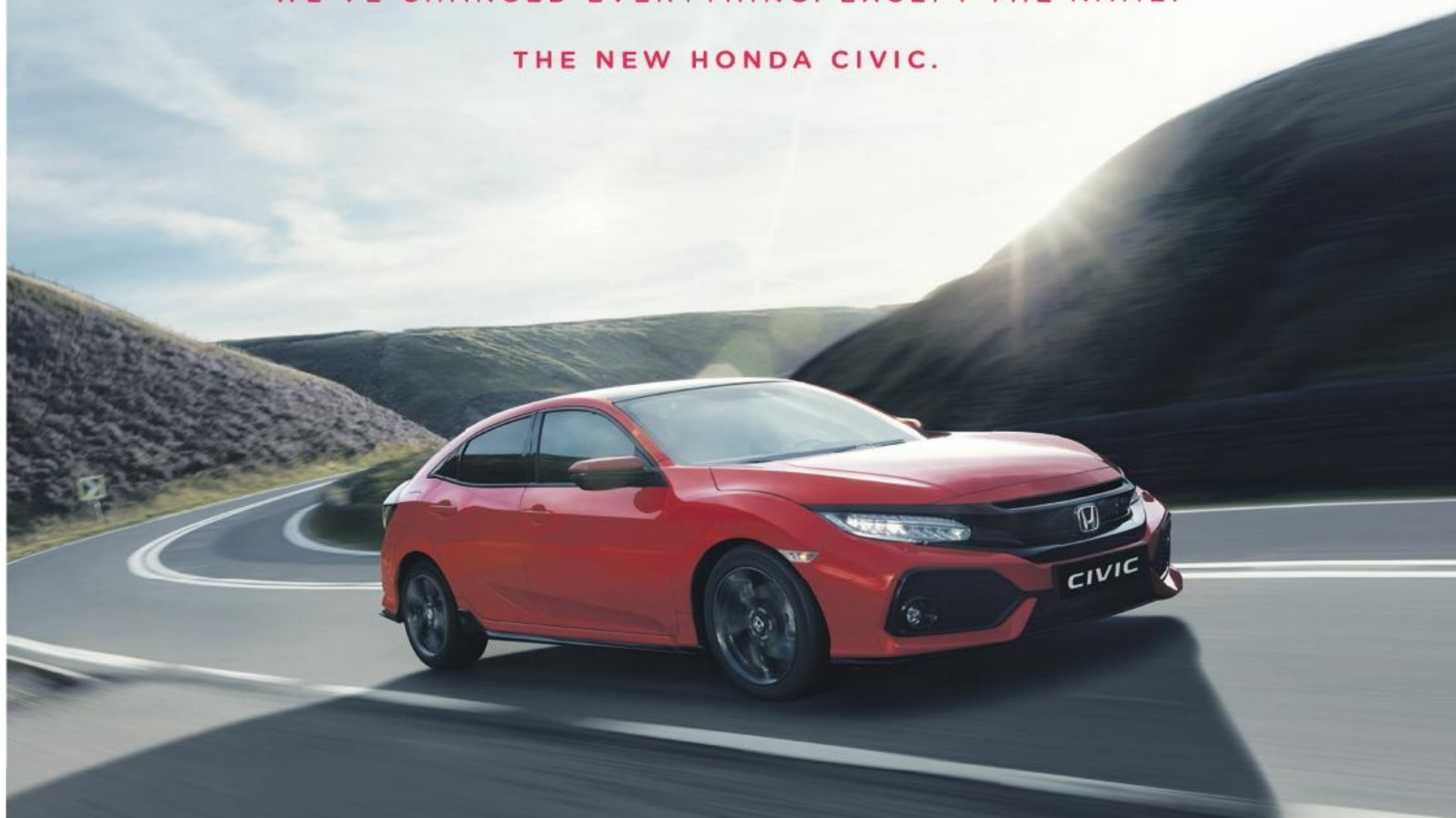
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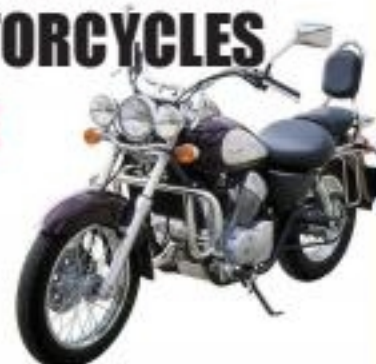
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Another missed cut for Pepperell in South Africa

Golf

ABINGDON golfer Eddie Pepperell is still waiting to make his first cut of the season after another disappointing result at the Joburg Open in South Africa.

He finished the tournament in a tie for 130th, after bad weather and flooding on Saturday saw the event reduced to just 54 holes.

In a very competitive field, Pepperell ended one under par for his two rounds, posting scores of 69 and 73.

The 26-year-old made a solid start to the tournament, with four birdies and two bogeys in his opening round putting him two under.

However his second round was much more topsy-turvy, with an eagle and two bogeys spoiled somewhat by five bogeys.

That left him on one under par, with four under the cut off point needed to make the final round's play.

So far this season Pepperell hasn't been able to break into the top-100 of the four tournaments he has played in, although his round one score of 69 at the Joburg Open was his first under 70 this year.

South African player Darren Fichardt was the overall winner on 15 under par, one shot ahead of England's Paul Waring and Welshman Stuart Manley.

Golf club tees off green credentials

Golf

BEST known as one of Oxfordshire's finest golf clubs, Frilford Heath now has another award to its name: Outstanding Environmental Project of the Year 2017.

The award, which is one of the categories under the 2017 Golf Environment Awards (GEA), was announced at the Hotel Du Vin, in Harrogate, in a ceremony hosted by the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) Group in January.

The course lies within Frilford Heath, Ponds and Fens's Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

A unique Oxfordshire habitat, Frilford Heath Golf Club amazed the judging panel with their fen restoration works at Boundary House Fen.

Neglected for many years, their efforts have seen the return of a number of fen indicator species including bog pimpernel, which is only found at a handful of sites in Oxfordshire.

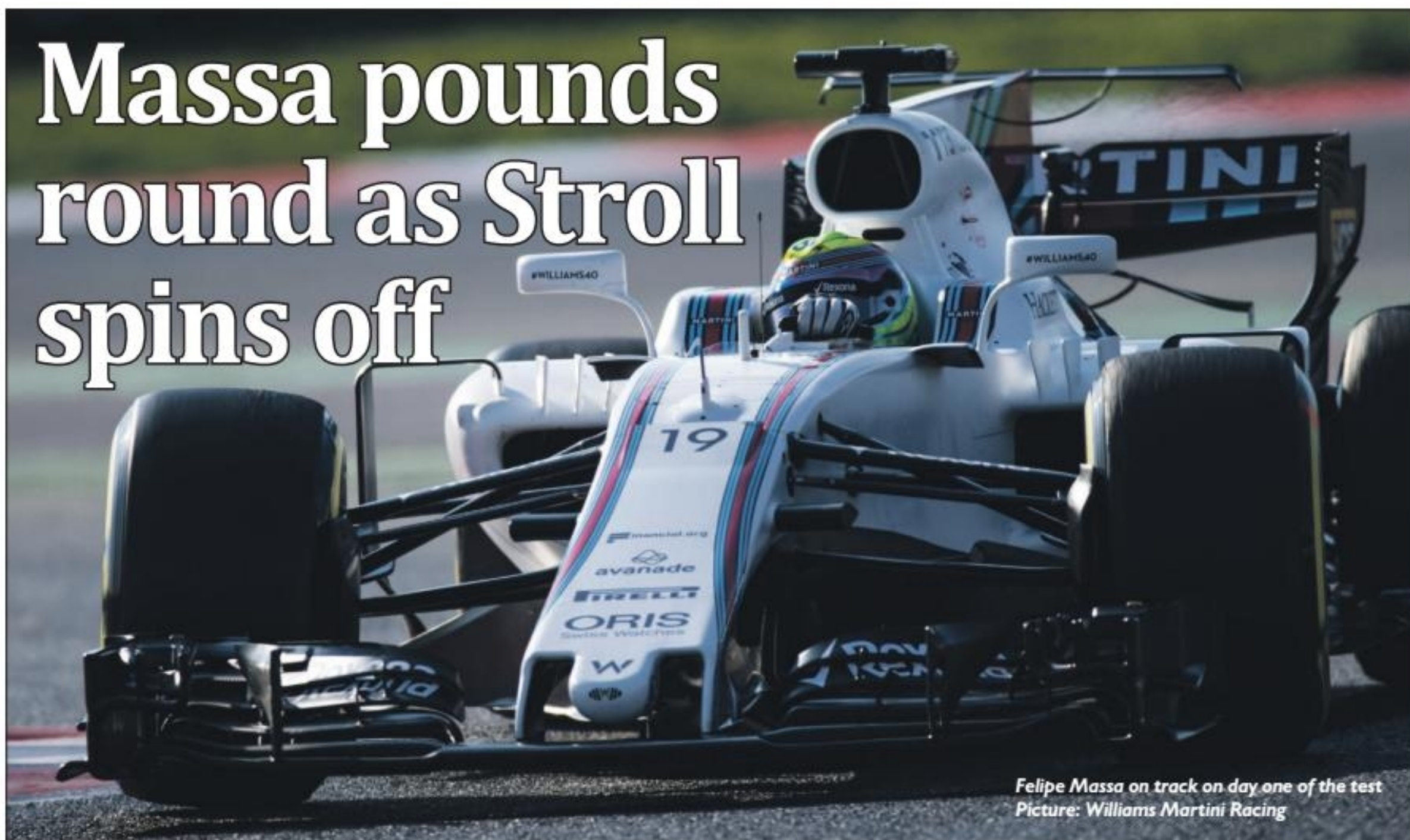
In partnership with Natural England, and with the help of Abingdon Green Gym volunteers, the green-keeping team have worked to enhance this nationally important habitat for the future of the SSSI.

Speaking about the award, company chairman Alistair Booth said: "We are delighted to receive recognition for our work with partners by winning this award."

"The fen restoration is just one of a series of activities undertaken at the golf course to enhance the rare habitat."

Oxfordshire's F1 teams get their first chance to try out

Massa pounds round as Stroll spins off



Felipe Massa on track on day one of the test
Picture: Williams Martini Racing

F1 - Williams

By Adam Flinn

WILLIAMS had a mixed start to pre-season testing as Felipe Massa produced some quick times on day one, while Lance Stroll spun off after just 12 laps on day two.

Massa pounded round the Spanish track of Catalunya on the first day of this week's test on Monday, notching up an impressive 103 laps – the second highest amount of any driver.

His time of 1:22.076 was the third fastest of the day, within three tenths of the best time set by Lewis Hamilton in the Mercedes.

Testing is notoriously unreliable in gauging how the cars are performing in comparison to each other, but both the team and Massa were happy after giving the FW40 its first proper run.

Massa said: "The first day of the test is always one where you hope everything on the car works well and that it's reliable, and with 103 laps on the board I'd say that wasn't bad at all."

"It's early to say where we are whilst we're still in this learning stage, but I'm really enjoying driving. "Overall it was a great first day, which is really positive for the whole team."

"We completed more than 100 laps and I really hope we learn new things day by day and prepare ourselves as best as we can for the first race in Australia."

However it was a tougher day on Tuesday for Massa's rookie teammate Stroll, as an early spin into the gravel trap ended his running prematurely.

The 18-year-old Canadian was six laps into his second run during the morning and was caught out by low

grip, sending his Williams barrelling backwards through the gravel.

He was able to recover to the pit lane, but the damage was such that the Grove-based team had to pull down the shutters early.

Rob Smedley, Williams' head of performance engineering, said: "Lance was on lap six of his second run when he had a spin."

"The grip was particularly low and so he spun and went through the gravel backwards."

"Even though the accident was entirely innocuous we've unfortunately had quite a bit of accident damage."

"We will be able to recover the programme in the coming days."

Stroll was back out on track yesterday to try and make up some lost ground, with day three of the test continuing as The Oxford Paper went to press.

But despite his troubled start Stroll was optimistic about how things were going.

He said on day two: "It is still early days and I have only done a handful of laps."

"I am just getting to grips with the FW40, and there is still a lot of time ahead of us."

"It was good to finally get behind the wheel to just get a feel for it."

"I need to do a lot more running before I know exactly where I am and where the car is at, and I will have a much better picture once we have more laps under our belts."

"But it was good to break the ice and I am looking forward to some more running."

This week's test ends today, with the second test running from Tuesday to Friday next week, ahead of the first race of the season in Australia on March 26.

Smith gearing up for start of new season

MotoGP

OXFORD MotoGP racer Bradley Smith has been showing off his new bike for the coming season, as Red Bull KTM enter their first MotoGP campaign.

After representing Tech3 at both Moto2 and MotoGP since 2011, Smith, alongside his Yamaha teammate Pol Espargaro, have joined new team Red Bull KTM Factory Racing for their debut 2017 season.

And on Monday last week, the pair helped officially unveil their new KTM RC16 bikes at the new KTM Motorsports building in Munderfing, Austria.

It was rolled out at the end of October 2015 at the Red Bull Ring in Spielberg, Austria, and since then the team has conducted more than

50 test days on various GP circuits around the world.

And Smith can't wait to start chasing points with it.

The 26-year-old said: "This is something that you have always wished for and that you've worked for throughout your career."

"Finally, when you get the opportunity, there's the pressure that goes with it, but I certainly embrace the opportunity I have."

"Pol and I and all the team will be working incredibly hard."

"We've been busy with the winter tests, and this is just the beginning."

"I'm excited to see what 2017 brings."

Smith also confirmed that he is back to full fitness after injuring his leg last season, with the first GP of the new season taking place in Qatar on March 26.



Bradley Smith with his new KTM bike
Picture: Sebas Romero

Oxford Gane a point after debut strike by Evie for home draw

Ouwfc

UNITED picked up their first point of the WSL Spring Series after fighting out a 1-1 home draw against Brighton.

Having lost at home in their opener to Everton the yellows were keen to kickstart their campaign.

They made their intentions clear in the first five minutes as captain Lauren Haynes managed to find space before her shot drifted wide of the post.

Striker Ini Umotong thought she had put the U's 1-0 up in the 10th minute after a terrific delivery from a corner but the referee had already blown for a foul.

Umotong was also denied minutes later after being through on goal but was brought down by Albion defender Charlotte Young, who was given a rather lenient yellow card.

Midway through the first half Brighton enjoyed a spell of possession but the away side stood firm with some resolute defending.

Oxford's strong defence was undone in the 32nd minute as Bron-



Oxford Women celebrate Evie Gane's equaliser against the Seaside.

wen Thomas struck past United keeper Demi Lambourne to make it 1-0 to the Seaside.

In the 38th minute another chance fell to Umotong but she blasted over the bar.

The yellows started off the second half brightly and were very much

in control of the ball. Again Umotong burst forward but was brought down, with the referee waving play on.

Twenty-five minutes from the end, Evie Gane made a dream debut by equalising for Oxford to secure the first point of the season.

Didcot go off the rails again as hunt goes on for first win of 2017

Didcot Town

DIDCOT Town are still without their first league win of 2017 after they went down 2-1 at AFC Totton on Saturday.

Their hosts, who sit four places below The Railwaymen, started the brighter of the two and were rewarded with a penalty for handball

in the 12th minute.

Totton striker Nathaniel Sherborne stepped up, initially missing from the spot but following up from the rebound to fire the home side in front.

Totton continued to threaten, but George Jeacock made it 1-1 with a low shot from distance that goalkeeper Charlie Seattle was unable to keep out.

The sides went into the break all square. Just after the hour mark Charlie Gibson fired home past Didcot keeper Leigh Bedwell to give Totton a 2-1 lead. Didcot pushed for an equaliser with Callum McNish and Ben Whitehead going close but they were unable to prevent the visitors slipping to an eighth game without a win.

United lose game of Ardley any chances

Ardley United

ARDLEY United succumbed to their first league defeat in five games as they went down 1-0 at home to Lydney Town on Saturday.

In a game of few chances, the first half was one to forget - littered with poor play and a whistle that blew at every challenge.

It took until the 24th minute for any real threat of a goal when a quick Lydney throw saw Lewis Bamford in behind the home defence, but as he looked to shoot a blue shirt got across to block and the chance was gone.

Seconds after the restart the home side started brightly as a Jack Ross pass found Leam Howards but he miskicked his shot.

Ardley continued to dominate, enjoying plenty of possession.

But Lydney's solid defending was rewarded with a penalty 11 minutes from time.

Declan Morley-Lyne fired home from the spot to make it 1-0.



Earlier on, Ardley felt they should have been awarded a penalty when Cruise went down in the box but the referee judged it to be just outside.

Ardley remain sixth in the table and they visit league leaders Brackwell next weekend.

Tuesday's Supplementary Cup game with Letcombe was postponed.

United bid farewell to 'terrific servant'

LOYAL coach Richard Blackmore has left Oxford United's coaching set-up after nearly two decades at the club.

The long-serving Blackmore, pictured right, stepped down last week after 17 years with the U's.

He left the club immediately from his most recent role as general manager at the academy.

United said he "has been a terrific servant of the club" and "will be much missed by everyone behind the scenes".

Over the years Blackmore has held a variety of roles at United, from coach to women's manager.

He told the club website: "I have loved my time at the club and it has been a massive part of my life for so long, but I feel the time is right to move on and find a new challenge."

"I am privileged to have met so many fantastic people along the way and am particularly proud of the work we have done to develop the women's team and the pathway for talented young footballers to make their way all the way to the first team."

"I'd like to thank everyone for their help and friendship over the years



and wish the club well for the future."

U's chairman Darryl Eales paid his own tribute, saying: "Richard has worked extremely hard behind the scenes and we are going to miss him."

"On behalf of everyone at the club we thank him for everything he has done and wish him well in whatever he chooses to do next."

"He remains a true friend of the club and is welcome back anytime."

Sky to show Wanderers clash

THE Sky Sports cameras will roll up to the Kassam later this month as Oxford United's Sky Bet League 1 home game against Bolton Wanderers has been selected for TV.

There is no change to the date, with the game still being played on Tuesday, March 21, or to kick-off, which remains at 7.45pm.

Michael Appleton's side returned from Bolton in October with maximum points following an impressive 2-0 win.

Chris Maguire and the now-injured Wes Thomas found the back of the net that day.

The game is the second time the Sky cameras have visited the U's this season, after October's 3-1 defeat to AFC Wimbledon.

Tickets are also now on sale for United's trip to Oldham on Tuesday, March 14.

Get tickets for both games at ouftickets.co.uk or 01865 337533.

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6	Millwall	34	8	55
7	Southend United	34	10	53
8	Peterborough United	35	2	50
9	Oxford United	32	9	49
10	Rochdale	32	2	48
11	Bristol Rovers	35	-2	48
12	AFC Wimbledon	34	2	46
13	Walsall	34	-3	46
14	Milton Keynes Dons	34	1	43
15	Charlton Athletic	34	4	42
16	Shrewsbury Town	35	-11	41
17	Northampton Town	35	-8	40
18	Bury	35	-9	40
19	Gillingham	35	-11	39
20	Oldham Athletic	35	-11	39
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Conor McAleny scores the best of his three goals against Chesterfield on Saturday and inset right, Josh Ruffels in action in the same game
Pictures: Darrell Fisher



An in-Spired performance

By George Scotland

OXFORD United moved within four points of the League One play-offs after thrashing Chesterfield 4-0 on the road on Saturday.

On-loan Everton striker Conor McAleny scored two unbelievable goals before completing a hat-trick in the second half as the City of Dreaming Spires showed their class over the relegation threatened Spireites.

The Yellows, like much of their performances this season, showed great energy from the start with wingers Chris Maguire and Rob Hall terroris-

ing the Chesterfield defence.

And it was Hall who fired Oxford in-front after West Ham loanee Toni Martinez made a smart run before storming into the box to square the ball for his team mate, who scored with his first touch.

Chesterfield had only really had two good chances in the first 45 when Simon Eastwood made a good save to keep out Kristian Dennis's effort.

Shortly afterwards, former Championship heavyweight Sylvan Ebanks-Blake was unlucky with a snap shot on the turn that flew straight over the bar.

Just before the break, Liam Sercombe moved forward at pace and then found McAleny, who only joined Oxford last month.

He turned on the style with brilliant technique to smash home a bouncing ball into the top left corner to give them a comfortable 2-0 lead.

Oxford continued to dominate at the Proact Stadium way into the second half but Chesterfield, desperate for points at the bottom of the table, started to throw men forward.

By the 60th minute, 24-year-old McAleny scored his second as the Chesterfield back four failed to close

him down. At 3-0 there was no coming back for the home side.

Less than 10 minutes later, Martinez added his name to the list of Oxford United hat-trick heroes as he coolly planted the ball home, assisted by Sercombe.

It could have been worse for Chesterfield.

Maguire and Martinez both had one on one chances before the end but, regardless, 900 away fans went back to Oxford proud after a triumphant victory.

This weekend United are back at the Kassam taking on Bristol Rovers.



Ruffels signs new contract to 2018

AFTER the great result at the weekend there was more good news for United with midfielder Josh Ruffels signing a new contract until June 2018.

The 23-year-old, whose contract was due to expire this year has made 19 appearances for Oxford so far, scoring one goal.

The midfielder has been described by head coach Michael Appleton as 'a trusted member' of the squad but has only made one league appearance since October featuring in the 4-0 thrashing away to Chesterfield on Saturday.

Appleton praised Ruffels in December as a 'diamond' and is glad to have kept him for two more years, recently saying he was an integral part of the squad.

Despite his limited starts for the club this season, the former Coventry City trainee never gave serious consideration to turning down Oxford.

He said: "I've been really happy here. My game time has been limited and the thought of going out on loan was in my mind but I think I've made the right decision now."

Before signing a new contract, the former Kidlington schoolboy had been at the club four years joining in June 2013 on a free transfer.

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